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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BUCHAREST 000519

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STATE DEPT FOR EUR/NCE - WILLIAM SILKWORTH

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SUBJECT: WHAT ROMANIA CAN DO TO PROMOTE STABILITY, SECURITY
AND DEMOCRACY IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

REF: A. BUCHAREST 411

- [1](#)B. BUCHAREST 447
- [1](#)C. BUCHAREST 278
- [1](#)D. 05 USNATO 759
- [1](#)E. 05 BUCHAREST 2354

Classified By: CDA Mark Taplin for Reasons 1.4 (a), (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Romania's desire to play an active role in the Black Sea region could, if properly channeled and supported by the U.S., the U.K. and like-minded partners, further our goals for the region and beyond. Bucharest could play a positive role in promoting regional efforts to strengthen democratic institutions, diversify energy sources, and combat asymmetric transnational threats such as TIP and narcotics trafficking. Existing organizations like the Bucharest-based Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) Regional Center can help further these goals, but more support from Washington and European capitals is needed to persuade skeptical neighbors along the Black Sea rim to begin to cooperate seriously on a regional basis. The June 5 Black Sea forum in Bucharest provides an opportunity to jumpstart this process, but we need to provide counsel to the Romanians on how to best focus their efforts, as well as lend encouragement to Bulgaria and NATO-aspirants Ukraine and Georgia to work together more closely on a regional basis. It also provides an opportunity to send a clear message to a reluctant Ankara in particular that more regional dialogue rather than less is the best way for it to maintain its leading role on the Black Sea and to collaborate with NATO and EU members in addressing "soft security" questions that have growing implications for Europe and beyond. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On March 20, the Ambassador assembled Country Team members for a wide-ranging offsite discussion of Black Sea issues. Embassy Bucharest offers these thoughts as our contribution to the ongoing USG assessment of a strategy towards the Black Sea region. If all politics are local, it may be true that all global strategies are too. The standing-up of an East European Task Force in Romania and Bulgaria may be, when viewed from Washington, mostly about cutting-edge military training and operations far beyond the Black Sea rim. However, for the countries in the region itself, our new presence on the Black Sea has meant strategic recalibrations -- some more enthusiastic than others -- as well as no small measure of heartburn. For this reason, among others, it is imperative that we set a clear policy direction, on a government-wide basis, so that regional capitals will better understand our objectives -- and correspondingly will be less likely to make miscalculations about a neighborhood which shows every sign of becoming more

critical for U.S. interests.

The Black Sea "Security Paradox"

13. (C) Country Team members immediately identified the Black Sea "security paradox": despite the presence of three NATO members on the Black Sea littoral, and the planned accession of both Romania and Bulgaria to the EU in January, 2007, the Black Sea region and its neighborhood remain very much on the "frontier" of a prosperous and democratic Europe. The Black Sea region itself is home to at least three frozen conflicts and abuts the still-unstable Western Balkans. The area's nascent democracies face major challenges, including entrenched endemic corruption within their borders and the threats posed by transnational crime syndicates, which transcend national boundaries.

14. (C) The region is Europe's "gateway" to the Caucasus and the Middle East, as well as an increasingly major point of entry into Europe for oil and natural gas from those areas. Indeed, much of the Romanian focus on the Black Sea region reflects its growing dependence on foreign sources of energy, including Russian gas imports. (Ref A) Although the region is a crossroads for legitimate commerce, having reemerged in the post Cold War era as the pathway from the Middle East to Europe, law enforcement experts note that the Black Sea region is also increasingly becoming a crucible for illegal trade -- from smuggling of cigarettes, stolen cars and oil to trafficking in drugs, persons, small arms and, possibly, weapons of mass destruction (WMD). While hard statistics are difficult to come by due to an extraordinarily low rate of interdiction, illegal trafficking via the Black Sea region probably accounts for most of the trafficking in persons from Eastern Europe, much of the Middle Eastern migrant smuggling into Western Europe, a large percentage of the heroin

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smuggled from Afghanistan and a significant proportion of small arms and light weapons smuggled out of Transnistria.

15. (C) Since 2004, senior GOR officials have regularly consulted Embassy Bucharest on Black Sea issues, seeking our guidance and feedback on Romania's ongoing formulation of a Black Sea regional strategy. GOR policy makers have consistently told us that Romania's overarching goal is to "anchor the region to the strategic mainstream" (Ref B) by linking the region to Euro-Atlantic structures, notably NATO and the EU. They view this linkage as the only way to successfully confront asymmetrical, trans-border threats and regional instability. Romania remains eager to play a constructive and supportive role in the Black Sea region, but seeks U.S. leadership in bringing the region closer to the West, a point that President Traian Basescu has repeatedly stressed, both in meetings with U.S. interlocutors and in public remarks. Initially, the Romanian approach to regional issues focused on "hard security" concerns but since last year, and at U.S. urging, the GOR has increasingly turned its attention to efforts to encourage regional cooperation with a "soft security" focus. The GOR devised its June 5 "Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership Summit" with this in mind and views active U.S. support for the forum as pivotal to its success. The GOR frets that absent U.S. urging, Russia, Turkey (and others) will send low level representatives to attend the forum. (Ref C)

A Robust, if Untraditional, Role for NATO

16. (C) In Embassy's view, NATO has an important role to play in the region, but that role should not just include traditional defense issues. Far more than a military alliance, NATO serves as a steppingstone for EU membership and a partner in democracy development. As USNATO has noted, NATO can serve as both a "mentor and magnet for fragile democracies." (Ref D) In light of declining assistance budgets regionally, NATO may be one of the best tools available for the promotion of democratic institutions and

regional cooperation. Although the Partnership for Peace (PfP) program is valuable for regional states with declared Euro-Atlantic aspirations (Ukraine, Georgia), countries in the region that do not belong to the PfP can benefit from targeted security cooperation programs, including programs aimed at defense reform, a key aspect of which is civilian control of the military and the development of durable democratic institutions. Romania, with its recent experience as a post-communist state, fledgling democracy and NATO aspirant, has a great deal to offer to countries in the region exploring closer Euro-Atlantic ties. Next week, for example, Romania is hosting a group of senior Georgian parliamentarians under the auspices of a USG-funded NATO tour. Romania could also serve as a host/key participant in NATO programs without a specific military focus, such as NATO-led environmental projects.

A "Harmonious" Model for Both Romania and Turkey?

¶17. (C) Romania's reticence about an expanded BLACKSEAFOR under Turkish and Russian leadership reflects bona fide concerns about Moscow and Ankara's efforts to, in effect, exclude NATO from the Black Sea region (Ref E). On the other hand, senior GOR officials have told us that Romania is open to the possibility of an expanded Operation Black Sea Harmony (OBSH), provided it would not be dominated by Turkey. Under Bucharest's vision, OBSH would have rotating leadership and would be open to participation by NATO assets (ships and aircraft) from the Mediterranean, including from NATO's Mediterranean-based Operation Active Endeavor (OAE). Romania adamantly opposes Turkish control over information flow to NATO from OBSH, with one senior Romanian naval officer characterizing the current Turkish attitude on intelligence sharing with NATO as "Turkey would pass to NATO what it needs to know." If these concerns could be surmounted, Romania would be an important, even eager, participant in an expanded OBSH -- but it will not participate in an OBSH that is "morphed" into BLACKSEAFOR or dominated by players who are antagonistic to a broader role in the region for the Euro-Atlantic community.

SECI: Cooperating at the Crossroads

¶18. (C) The Black Sea could use more regional institutions like the Bucharest-based Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) Regional Center for Combating Transborder Crime. Its emphasis on issues like TIP, narco-trafficking

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and conventional smuggling is the right fit for the Black Sea and Balkans space. SECI conducted 21 regional operations between 2002-2005 targeting a gamut of criminal enterprises. One prominent example of SECI's value to the region: the anti-TIP Operation Mirage has netted, to date, 809 traffickers. Given that 300,000 containers transit the port of Constanta each year, and an ambitious port expansion is planned, SECI's recently launched Container Security Initiative exemplifies the organization's cutting edge approach to regional law enforcement issues. Romanian policy makers strongly support SECI but insist SECI will not work without continued U.S. backing, expressing concerns of late that USG support for SECI could be lagging. (Ref B) Despite its success so far, and the rising interest in operating out of SECI demonstrated by law enforcement agencies like FBI and DEA, the Center still needs a "hands-on" U.S. presence to facilitate, coordinate and -- on occasion -- to cajole. This will remain the case until at least 2009, the first year that substantial EU resources might be available to sustain SECI's operations and activities.

Adopting a Joint Task Force Model

¶19. (C) Another practical way to promote Black Sea security would be to encourage each of the region's governments to develop internal inter-agency coordination modeled on the U.S. Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF). Issues such as

TIP and narcotics smuggling tend to fall between the cracks of those agencies which have the capacities to track traffickers (including the military and intelligence services) but lack law enforcement jurisdiction and law enforcement agencies which have the jurisdiction but lack intelligence gathering capacities. One possible U.S. contribution to the June 5 Bucharest "Black Sea Forum" could be to urge Black Sea states to promote a "task force model" of inter-agency cooperation at the national level.

Energy Diversification: New Route(s) to Regional Cooperation?

¶10. (C) Long skeptical of Russia, the Romanians received one more reason to mistrust their giant neighbor to the east this winter, when the temporary lowering of gas pressure from Russia made the entire region shudder in the cold. Energy diversification is now a renewed Romanian priority, as it has become for many of its neighbors. An issue that had barely registered on the Bucharest policy seismograph before has caught the attention of President Basescu, who during a recent Gulf trip announced a project to build an LNG terminal in Constanta for Qatari gas, and Prime Minister Tariceanu, who has touted the merits of the Nabucco project repeatedly since a winter visit to Ankara.

¶11. (C) Romania, along with fellow NATO members Bulgaria and Turkey, seem to be well-positioned to advocate for, and participate in, a range of "southern corridor" energy options. If we help our partners articulate a long-term vision for a network of pipelines and upgraded ports in the Black Sea region, a powerful new cooperative dynamic could take hold where little in the way of shared economic interests has been evident before. Without strategic vision, international cooperation and large investments, however, this opportunity could be lost. We should also strongly encourage closer regional integration through free trade arrangements, eased border and customs processes, harmonized transportation networks (e.g. there is no single rail-gauge standard in the region), harmonized energy and hydrocarbon regulations and infrastructure and greater reliance on market pricing. Partners like the World Bank and EBRD could be brought to the table to provide real-world resources and strategic leverage.

Civil Society on the Black Sea Frontier

¶12. (C) Although we have saved this category for last, the objective of promoting civil society and democratic governance is probably the most important work we could take on in the broader Black Sea region. Even outside the NATO context, the success of Ukraine, Georgia and potentially Moldova in carrying out full-fledged democratic transformations over the next decade and a half would make an enormous difference in terms of promoting security and stability in this sensitive zone. Fifteen years ago, the prospect of Romania carrying out the necessary reforms to join both NATO and the European Union would have seemed, to put it charitably, highly implausible. Even if our USG assistance resources are dwindling, we still need to find

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ways to invest in building bridges among NGOs in the Black Sea region, in promoting anti-corruption efforts, and in helping our Central and East European partners in sharing their experience of democratic transformation with the fledgling democracies further east. To this end, we support ideas like the German Marshall Fund's "Black Sea Fund" proposal along with other approaches for putting small grants with USG cost-sharing into the hands of grassroots civil society builders so that they can undertake projects and build networks further into the Black Sea region. However stretched we are today for resources, this type of relatively small investment could, in time, pay off a hundred times over in a future Black Sea space that is about more than frozen conflicts and simmering suspicions.

¶13. (U) AmEmbassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNet website:

www.state.sgov.gov/eur/Bucharest

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